

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4356

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FROM AMCONGEN ALEXANDRIA

E.O. 11652: NA

TAGS: EWWT EG

SUBJECT: ALEXANDRIA PORT CONGESTION

REF: CAIRO 4677

1. PRESS JUNE 3 REPORTED "ALEXANDRIA PORT CONGESTION ENDED" AS 300,000 TONS OF MERCHANDISE WERE MOVED OFF DOCKS IN MAY. PRESUMABLY THIS FIGURE REFERS TO GOODS PREVIOUSLY ARRIVED AND STORED, SINCE NORMAL TONNAGE THROUGH THE PORT (INCLUDING OUTGOING) IS ABOUT 1 MILLION TONS PER MONTH.

2. CERTAINLY CONSIDERABLE IMPROVEMENT IN SITUATION IS VISIBLE. VISIT

TO PORT AREA JUNE 4 REVEALED MUCH PROGRESS SINCE MAY 9 INSPECTION (REFTEL). WE ESTIMATE OPEN STORAGE REDUCED BY 1/3 OR EVEN 1/2. BULK OF REMAINING GOODS ARE (A) BUILDING MATERIALS, (B) HEAVY INDUSTRIAL AND CONSTRUCTION EQUIPMENT AND (C) CHEMICALS (INCLUDING FERTILIZER). FIRST TWO CATEGORIES INCLUDE MATERIAL SEEN THERE IN LAST SURVEY, OBVIOUSLY UNTOUCHED FOR LONGER TIME THAN 15-DAY GRACE PERIOD EARLIER DECREED. THIRD CATEGORY SEEMS MOSTLY NEWLY ARRIVED AND WAS SUBJECT OF INTENSE ACTIVITY INCLUDING HARD-WORKING ARMY PERSONNEL AND VEHICLES.

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3. GRAIN DOCKS ALSO AREA OF FEVERISH ACTIVITY WITH 8 BULK CARRIERS

(ALSO UTILIZING NEARBY LUMBER DOCKS) DISCHARGING SIMULTANEOUSLY INTO SILOS, BARGES AND RAILROAD HOPPER CARS, WHILE LARGE AND BUSY WORK CREWS (AGAIN INCLUDING ARMY) BAGGED FROM SILOS AND VACUVATORS. AMPLE AND UNUSUALLY WELL ORGANIZED TRANSPORT FOR BAGGED GRAIN INCLUDED PRIVATE AND ARMY TRUCKS, AND RAILROAD BOX CARS AND GONDOLAS.

4. ONE OTHE COMMODITY WHICH CONTRIBUTES MUCH TO CONGESTION AND APPEARS ALSO TO BE FLAUNTING 15-DAY RULE IS MASS OF MOTOR VEHICLES. NORMAL STORAGE AREA IS JAM PACKED AND SEVERAL HUNDRED CARS TAKE UP MOST OF PUBLIC PARKING SPACE, SIDEWALKS AND EVEN LAWNS OF PASSENGER TERMINAL BUILDING.

5. PORT DIRECTOR TELLS US WAITING LINE OUTSIDE HARBOR IS NOW DOWN TO ABOUT 20 VESSELS. HOWEVER, THESE ARE ALL GENERAL CARGO SHIPS, WHICH HAVE ALWAYS HAD LOWEST PRIORITY FOR PIER SPACE AND WAITING TIME STILL RUNS ONE TO TWO WEEKS.

6. COMMENT: WHILE PORT CONGESTION STILL FAR FROM "ENDED", COMMENDABLE PROGRESS HAS BEEN MADE. IN ADDITION TO SIZEABLE REDUCTION IN WAITING LINE AND WAITING TIME, WE NOTE DEFINITE INCREASE IN WHAT PASSES HERE FOR EFFICIENCY AND PRODUCTIVITY. THIS IS PARTYLY DUE TO MORE ELBOW ROOM ON DOCKS FOR TRANSPORT AND WORKERS AND SLIGHTLY IMPROVED TRAFFIC DISCIPLINE. SOME CREDIT DUE ARMY COMPONENT OF TRANSPORT AND WORK FORCE, BOTH BECAUSE OF ITS OWN EFFICIENCY AND DISCIPLINE AND HOPEFULLY ALSO AS GOOD EXAMPLE TO CIVILIANS. THIRD COMPONENT IS CERTAINLY STRONG MINISTERIAL SUPPORT WHICH LEAD TO MARSHALLING INCREASED RESOURCES (ESPECIALLY BETTER TRANSPORTATION) AND ON-THE-SPOT SUPERVISION AND DIRECTION BY PORT DIRECTOR SAMAHA AND STAFF ON CIVILIAN SIDE AND ARMY STAFF ON MILITARY SIDE. SIGNED CHASE.
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